Challenges and Opportunities in After-School Programs:
Lessons for Policymakers and Funders

April 2001

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Introduction

As schools focus more intensively on preparing students with the academic skills necessary for success in the information age, attention is increasingly turning to the experiences of children and youth in their out-of-school time. After-school, weekend and summer programs offer many opportunities to complement and enhance the academic learning that takes place in school. These programs are promising strategies for engaging children and youth in a variety of positive social, recreational and academic activities.

Unfortunately, while the need for enrichment opportunities exists everywhere, their availability is not universal. Too many poor youth do not have access to youth-serving organizations like Ys, Boys & Girls Clubs and Scouts. There may be none located in their neighborhoods; parents are concerned about their children's safety getting to and from the organizations; or families cannot afford the program's fees. In contrast, all young people have access to schools and, for the most part, parents are familiar with the schools and comfortable sending their children to them. Keeping schools open longer and transforming their facilities into youth and community centers expands the benefit derived from investment in these public buildings.

Recognizing these advantages, many newly emerging youth development programs are arising in schools, especially in poorer neighborhoods. Indeed, school-based, after-school programs are increasingly becoming the solution policymakers suggest for all sorts of youth problems—poor academic achievement, gang participation, violence and drug use. Federal spending alone for school-based, after-school programs has gone from $40 million in 1997 to a proposed $850 million in 2001.[1]

Policymakers, funders and the public, however, must balance their optimism about the programs' potential with the realities of what they might ultimately achieve. Locating these programs in schools brings many strengths; but, as the experience of at least one broad-based initiative is demonstrating, it also brings unique challenges that should be taken into consideration as programs are planned and funded. This brief report describes program realities and discusses issues that policymakers need to think through when shaping their after-school initiatives.

Information in the report is drawn from early findings of the multi-year evaluation of the Extended-Service Schools (ESS) Adaptation Initiative. Funded by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds (WRDF) and conducted by Public/Private Ventures and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, the evaluation is examining approximately 60 after-school programs in 17 cities around the country.[2] With support from WRDF, each city is adapting one of four nationally recognized extended-service school models. While each model is unique, they are all intended to offer high-quality youth development programs in school buildings through a partnership between a local school district and a community-based organization (CBO) and/or a university. (See the appendix for a description of the models.)

ESS's design intentionally embodies both model and city-level variations so the initiative and its accompanying evaluation can examine after-school programs in very different contexts. At the same time, the design offers an opportunity to identify the underlying issues involved in providing these programs, whatever the model and the local contexts in which they operate. This report focuses on three formidable challenges that have occurred with consistency across programs, regardless of the city where they are located or the after-school model they are implementing. It is organized around these key questions:

- What challenges arise in connection with programs' access to school space?
- What challenges arise concerning participation —are programs reaching the children and youth who could most benefit from them?
- What challenges arise with regard to transportation?

The following pages examine these issues, their underlying causes and the implications for social policy.[3]

Space and Programming

Location in a school building provides a program with several important advantages. First, the facilities are appropriate for a wide range of activities. Gyms, libraries, auditoriums and computer labs all provide unique equipment and space difficult to find elsewhere. Second, the school provides coordinators with ready access to potential participants, namely the student body. Third, the school offers the program legitimacy to parents who might hesitate to allow their children to participate in programs elsewhere.

But using schools as a venue for after-school programs is not as easy as it would appear—and for several concrete reasons.

The current notion that school buildings are underused resources, open for only six or seven hours during the school day and not at all in the summer, is too simplistic.

At least some parts of school buildings are often heavily used after hours: teachers prepare for their next day's classes and provide extra help to selected students; students use the libraries and computer labs to complete their assignments; sports teams practice; outside organizations (such as Scouts or private day-care providers) use the facilities. Even in the summers, the buildings are used—primarily for summer school programs that have become much more prevalent in reaction to the current movement to improve academic achievement. The result is that after-school programs often have to compete for space, particularly the gym or computer labs.

The availability of appropriate space is critical to the character of the program: it fundamentally affects the type and quality of activities that can be offered. For example, many activities require open, multi-purpose classrooms that can accommodate activities like aerobics or karate. Traditional classrooms crowded with desks are ill-suited for this purpose. But having access to a single multi-purpose room, such as the cafeteria, does not solve the problem because it is difficult to run several concurrent activities—for example, homework help, story time and a dance class—in just one of these rooms. The number and type of activities is thus constrained by the availability of appropriate space. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that multi-purpose and special rooms are often already in considerable demand in schools; and, as newcomers to the school, some programs found they were the first to be denied even a scheduled use if the school had a last-minute request from a teacher for the room.

In some of the ESS sites, space limitations are also, in part, a result of already overcrowded conditions in the schools. For example, one middle school was built to accommodate 450 students but has a current enrollment of 800. Similarly, an elementary school with the capacity for 360 students has an enrollment of 900. Obviously, school facilities and equipment are already being heavily used and there is little available space to share with the program.

In those schools that do have space to share, good relationships with key school personnel (principals, teachers and custodians) were at the heart of gaining access to the space. While schools and CBO staff typically shared a similar set of goals for the after-school programs, there were practical gaps in the level of trust. Program staff often recognized the need to be patient in developing their relationships with school staff. Coordinators gained the trust of key teachers by responding quickly to complaints and helping them out when they needed assistance (for example, with an after-school event or with supplies) and even by paying them to provide services. Some programs discovered that involving school principals in the hiring of ESS school coordinators and choosing staff who were already known to the school smoothed communication issues and facilitated access to space. In most cases, access to school space increased over time, as schools grew more comfortable with the programs and program staff. Yet, each time a new principal came on board, trust had to be re-established.

Limited resources for maintaining the school's physical facilities and equipment lead administrators to limit the building's use.

Heavily used and overcrowded school buildings are only part of the explanation of why space availability is a challenge for all the ESS programs. Principals are held responsible for the physical integrity of the school plant and, thus, are hesitant to let the program use school facilities unless they feel confident that school property will be respected. Limited in their resources to finance the maintenance and replacement of school facilities and equipment, they commonly feel the need to restrict and monitor use of such special rooms as computer labs, libraries, auditoriums and gyms with newly coated floors.

Everything depreciates with use—cars, equipment, schools. Given the tight budgets that most principals operate under, it is not surprising that there is tension between schools and program coordinators around the use of the building, student behavior in after-school activities, and maintenance issues. For the most part, coordinators are able to keep the rate of facility deterioration at a level comparable to the usual school-day strain; but when facilities and equipment are used, they inevitably wear out and break. Breakage means that school-day students, as well as after-school participants, have to do with less. Having to buy or repair a computer means that some other purchase has to be foregone. Program staff often believe that the tensions are created by school distrust of the program, but our study strongly suggests that the fundamental issue is not one of turf or control, but of resources. More public funds are needed to maintain school facilities if they are to be open for longer hours and used more intensively. Turf and control issues do arise but can be resolved over time as trust builds. The resource issue will not go away without the public's greater awareness and support.

Increased custodial costs are a related issue. While the scheduling of room cleaning might, on the surface, seem to be a readily solvable logistical detail, it in fact emerged as a significant issue for programs. If a program uses space that would otherwise not be in use every day, or uses it for more hours, the school faces extra cleaning demands. In addition, since programs operate outside of normal school hours, the schedule of cleaning must shift, and that often involves overtime costs. Each ESS collaborative has to determine how these costs will be shared. This, in turn, affects programming. In trying to minimize extra costs, school coordinators may curtail activities earlier than they want to or not offer adult activities in the evening (when more adults could attend) so as to have rooms empty for cleaning during the hours that custodians normally work.

Across the sites, programs and schools dealt in similar ways with the increased cleaning demands. They tried to coordinate the programs' use of space with custodians' cleaning schedules. Often, they attempted to stretch resources, having the custodians clean more in the same number of hours. At one school, custodial staff stayed an additional unpaid hour to support the needs of the ESS program. Many ESS staff also

informally took on cleaning responsibilities. As was the case with securing access to school space, finding solutions to the problem of additional cleaning depended on developing strong working relationships with school staff—particularly custodians and principals. However, over time, issues of liability and compliance with custodial union rules will have to be addressed.

In the larger context of implementing after-school programs, the most pressing issue is ensuring that schools can sustain the increased wear and tear on their facilities' infrastructures. As programs and schools face the challenge of locating additional funds to cover custodians' longer work days and other costs associated with upkeep and repair, policymakers must recognize that meeting maintenance needs is central to sustaining programs.

Who Participates?

Located in poor neighborhoods, the ESS programs are reaching thousands of racially and ethnically diverse low-income children. In fact, even in their first year of operations, programs in most of the schools served a hundred or more students. Over time, demand for the programs should increase as they establish strong reputations among parents and teachers at the schools, and growing numbers of word-of-mouth referrals complement the approaches to recruitment that programs are currently using.

As sites recruit students, the overriding challenge they are confronting is transportation; that challenge is discussed in the next section. This section looks at two more specific issues about which children and youth are participating in the programs.

Targeted efforts are needed to attract the most disadvantaged students.

Preliminary data suggest that while the ESS programs reach thousands of children who live in disadvantaged circumstances, additional effort is needed to attract the most disadvantaged students. In any new program with open enrollment, less needy children and their families are typically the ones who first learn about it and enroll. This also appears to be true in ESS. This is *not* to suggest that many needy students did not apply. However, the early enrolling children are somewhat less likely than their respective student bodies to come from low-income families. While three-quarters of the ESS school populations qualify for free- or reduced-priced lunch, only two-thirds (66%) of the program enrollees qualify. Similarly, the programs seem less able to draw in children from single-parent homes. While 37 percent of the students in these schools live with only one parent, 26 percent of the enrollees are from single-parent families.

According to a number of the program coordinators, many of the early enrollees were students who were probably more assertive and more involved in school and other activities. They also noted that parents who were most involved with their children were the ones who responded to the enrollment opportunity. Coordinators indicated that their programs were less successful in recruiting students who are behind in school, poor attenders, prone toward detention, lacking support at home, and from non-English-speaking and poor families. As one said, “I feel like we’re providing services to many needy kids, but I would like to serve more highly at-risk students.”

Referrals from principals, teachers and student support teams were the most common means through which programs attempted to recruit such at-risk youth. At the same time, several sites developed targeted recruitment strategies designed to be less stigmatizing than referrals. For example, one program held registration in public housing and low-income apartment units. In several other programs, staff made targeted home visits or delivered brochures (translated into other languages, where necessary) to specific parents' doors. Program staff often mentioned that sending information home with youth did not guarantee that parents would see it; direct contact proved to be important. They felt that if parents knew about the array of activities the after-school program provided, they would encourage their children to enroll.

In some cases, a barrier to recruiting the most at-risk youth was students' dislike of school. To address this issue and encourage the participation of poorly performing students, some programs stressed their association with a youth-serving organization. By having a strong Boys & Girls Club or YWCA identity, the programs hoped that students who were uncomfortable or unhappy in school would be more likely to participate. It is too early to say whether this assumption is accurate; students and staff spoke of youth being attracted by particular activities (such as a climbing wall or basketball) or by a particular staff member, rather than by an organization.

Older children are less attracted to after-school programs than are elementary school children.

In addition to providing children with enrichment opportunities, a key motivating factor behind the policy interest in after-school programs is the increasing need for school-aged child care. Apart from the 1970s, there have never been as many 5- to 14-year-olds in the United States as there are currently.[4] More of these children live with only one parent, and more of their mothers work than ever before. As societal norms and policies stress the importance of employment, the demand for school-aged child care has ballooned.

Almost all adults agree that elementary school children need adult supervision, but it is no less important for middle school youth. Young people aged 10 to 14 are often seen as old enough to stay on their own for short periods of time, but they are also old enough to get into serious trouble. Unfortunately, these older children are much less likely to participate in supervised after-school programs, whether they take place at youth-serving organizations or at their schools.

ESS program staff found it to be significantly easier to recruit elementary school children than middle- and high-school students, who almost always have busier schedules, increased responsibilities and greater freedom. Among the early enrollees, 30 percent were in grade three or lower, 45 percent were in grades four to six, 23 percent were in grades seven or eight, and only 2 percent were in grade nine or higher. In addition, according to program coordinators, the elementary-aged children who enrolled attended more frequently; older youth's attendance seemed much more inconsistent.

Coordinators devised several creative programming ideas to attract teens and have them participate consistently enough that the program might make a positive difference in their lives. One middle school program decided to begin charging an activity fee in the hope that it would build youth's commitment to attend. Other programs found that teens enjoyed organizing and participating in special events such as community service neighborhood clean-ups; running their own clubs; and working with younger youth as tutors, mentors or ESS staff. Offering teen programs with flexible open-door policies, along with opportunities for leadership and loosely guided autonomy seemed most effective. Two of the high school programs that offered student-run teen clubs gave students the responsibility to develop their own club names, rules and activities. Older youth were also drawn to programs that assisted them with job readiness and placement.

Transportation

Transportation appears to be the most complex and formidable of the challenges faced by school-based, after-school programs. It affects the hours of programming, who is able to participate and the cost of the program.

Programs' inability to provide transportation home is a major barrier to participation for a large proportion of students.

Programs operating in schools where a majority of the students live within safe walking distance are at a considerable advantage when it comes to recruiting participants. Yet the nature of urban schools makes the likelihood of this rare. School busing is a fact of life for many urban students, either because of desegregation mandates or because of the mismatch between heavily youth-populated neighborhoods and the location of schools.

Given the limited supply of buses and drivers, as well as their cost, there is a dearth of busing after hours. The consequences of inadequate transportation are substantial. Youth who live beyond walking distance from the school and lack adults who can pick them up simply cannot participate in the programs. In one ESS city, where 90 to 95 percent of the student population relies on busing, many youth face the possibility of being left out; but the situation has proven to be equally problematic in cities where only 25 percent or fewer of the students rely on busing. And in schools that were able to provide busing for some students, the number of seats available on those buses limited the number of children the program could recruit—one site, for example, had to keep enrollment to 150 students a day although more students would have participated had transportation home been available. Even when the children live within what might seem to be walking distance from the school, many parents feel uncomfortable, with good reason, about having them walk home alone in the dark at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.

ESS coordinators and program partners consistently highlighted their concerns about the challenges of transportation. They were particularly concerned because students who require after-hours busing—busing that is not available—are frequently those who could most benefit from the added support the programs offer. Those are often children whose parents work evening shifts and can neither arrange a pick up nor help with school work at home. We speculate that these are also frequently children of lower-income and single-parent families.

The immediacy of the transportation issue pressed programs to try to quickly develop solutions. In the best of circumstances, school districts were able to offer monetary or in-kind support for late busing. In one city, the school district already had late busing in operation for other school activities, which they then extended to ESS youth. In another city, the principal lobbied the district for a year to provide late busing; it finally agreed, with the stipulation that buses leave the school before 5:00 p.m. In a third city, the ESS summer program strategically dovetailed with summer school classes so that summer school students who stayed for ESS could return home on school district-funded buses. Through this arrangement, the summer program was able to serve a large group of youth, but it had a major drawback: students not enrolled in summer school were unable to participate in ESS activities.

The cost of transportation significantly increases programs' need for resources.

Paying for additional busing is expensive and, in almost all of the ESS sites, sufficient funding was not allotted to this service during the planning stages. In only one city was availability of transportation considered as schools were selected to become sites. In the rest of the cities, it emerged as a growing concern for which programs were largely under-prepared.

One program estimated the real costs of transportation to be three times what was originally budgeted. Another program calculated the costs of after-school busing to be $50,000 for the school year. Such daunting expenses contributed to one principal's proposal to the management team that the school make the ESS program a mandatory part of the school day, so the school district would have to pay for busing. (The proposal was not accepted.) Coordinators expressed frustration at the unwieldiness of the problem. As one noted, "If you want to keep people after school longer and later, you have to consider how they're going to get home. If there isn't any money to get people home, are we just spinning our wheels?"

In many cases, school districts found there was little they could do to ease the transportation problem. Either budgets were already stretched and money was unavailable, or there were restrictions on how transit money could be spent. In one city, for example, the school district gave transportation funding only to academic programs, and ESS was considered non-academic. A number of the ESS sites considered using public transportation, but only one actually went this route. While the expense is less formidable than school busing, it still involves additional cost. However, the main reasons that programs are reluctant to use public transportation is their concern about safety, particularly for elementary school students.

Given the substantial costs of providing buses and the significant effects that lack of busing has on participation, transportation is a continuing and urgent challenge for ESS programs. Without secured ways to transport bus-dependent youth to and from activities, school-based, after-school, weekend and summer programs become less viable. And as programs continue to work toward creative solutions to their transportation difficulties, the evidence suggests that long-term solutions rest in the capacity of cities and school districts to shoulder the financial responsibility.

As cities think about how to implement school-based, after-school programs, the implications of various transportation options need to be weighed. Programs can serve only the school's students, and buses can transport them home at the end of the day's programming. Or, the school-based, after-school programs can act like a neighborhood center and recruit only neighborhood youth, including those who do not attend the given school.

The two options have both advantages and disadvantages. Recruiting is easier if the target population goes to the school in which the program is held. Parents and children are familiar and comfortable with the building, and recruitment can be done during the school day. But paying for transportation is expensive. Even if resources (in-kind or financial) exist to pay for it, the program's costs rise. From a social policy perspective, these higher costs must be weighed against the program's benefits.

On the other hand, programs that target only neighborhood youth must conduct considerably more outreach to inform the parents and children who do not attend that school about the programs' opportunities.[5] In addition, school personnel are less likely to be as supportive of the program if the majority of participants attend other schools; we observed that both teachers and principals are most invested in meeting *their* students' needs. And, finally, neighborhood-based programs may still have to wrestle with the issue of getting children home after dark, even if they live close to the school. Thus, while the transportation costs will probably be smaller, the recruiting costs will increase, and not all of the transportation-related problems will disappear.

Conclusion

School-based, after-school programs are promising strategies for engaging children and youth in a variety of positive social, recreational and academic activities. The programs hold the potential of providing young people with opportunities to develop the skills, roles and relationships essential to their ultimate success while also sheltering them during a time of vulnerability. Locating such programs in schools is particularly sensible in low-income communities where there are few other available resources that children and their parents can use for educational and recreational purposes.

As often happens with promising interventions, people have very high and broad aspirations for after-school programs. Some hope they will provide children and youth with the basic life skills they need to succeed in school and as adults—such as social competence, anger management, persistence, responsibility, leadership, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Still others hope they will reduce neighborhood crime and increase schools' and children's ability to achieve higher academic standards. Policymakers and funders, however, must balance optimism about the programs' potential with some degree of caution. It is important to keep in mind that the programs face very real challenges in finding adequate resources—especially the space to house them and the transportation needed to take participants home.

Expectations for after-school programs should also be tempered by well-established knowledge about what youth programs can and cannot achieve and under what circumstances. As the ESS evaluation continues, we will be collecting evidence on the effectiveness of the programs; but based on what we have learned thus far, we can begin to speculate on their likely effects.

One expectation is that school-based, after-school programs will increase children's academic performance. Academic activities are a substantial part (about 40 percent of program hours) of all the ESS programs, regardless of which model is being adapted. The academic support directly expands children's learning opportunities, while the program's non-academic activities help meet some of their other needs, enabling them to be more attentive learners during the school day. Yet, obtaining academic impacts will be an uphill battle for programs because the acquisition of basic skills like reading and math is a cumulative process that takes time and requires consistent effort. Many of the programs have opted to serve more children less intensively (programming one or two days a

week for each age group) rather than fewer children more intensively (three to five days a week). Less frequent participation lessens the likelihood of positive impacts. In addition, mobility is often quite high in low-income neighborhoods, and many of the enrollees leave the program too soon to benefit. Finally, even if a program does intensively serve its participants, it is unlikely that, at current levels of funding, it will dramatically increase a school's overall test scores, because the proportion of students in a school who attend these programs is now relatively small. However, academic impacts may be achievable for students who attend frequently for an extended period of time.

Many people hope that school-based, after-school programs will reduce youth crime and victimization. ESS's effect on crime is not likely to live up to advocates' dreams, but may still be positive. Most serious juvenile crime is committed by older youth, who, at least currently, are less likely to attend after-school programs. Neighborhood delinquency and vandalism, however, may decline because they are perpetrated by younger children. Several principals mentioned lower rates of vandalism since their ESS program had begun. In addition, by providing a supervised, safe, after-school environment, programs may result in a lower rate of victimization among younger children.

Another commonly cited benefit is that after-school programs will provide children with opportunities to use their time constructively. We observed that the programs did actively attract and engage thousands of children and youth who have few other positive options for filling their after-school time. Participants in the programs spoke warmly about the staff, an important indicator of program quality. While the evaluation is still in the process of closely examining students' experiences in the programs, we can speculate that they are providing frequent participants with meaningful adult relationships, opportunities to interact with their peers, and the chance to learn new skills and refine old ones.

While this discussion may be sobering for some, it is meant to focus attention on the real benefits after-school programs can have. We have long known that children and youth need to have access to developmental opportunities over the course of their childhood and adolescence. We also know that ongoing adult support makes a difference in their lives. After-school programs can offer these benefits. In addition, valuable cross-pollination may occur by locating youth programming in schools. Schools are inherently developmental: they meet children and youth where they are and, through a series of increasingly challenging activities, encourage them to reach higher levels of achievement. Locating after-school programs in schools may, thus, encourage youth programs to emphasize the importance of stretching youth. Conversely, schools may also be positively affected when teachers see other talents and behaviors in their students.

Since Fall 1999, when data collection for this report ended, we have continued to examine how the programs are evolving. They have all grown stronger and many are now serving more children. Over the next few years, we will explore the costs of implementing and sustaining the programs and the ways in which they affect the lives of the children and youth who participate.

Endnotes

1 In addition to this federal initiative—the 21st Century Community Learning Centers—state and local governments have been expanding their investment in after-school initiatives. For example, in school year 1999, New York increased funding for Advantage Schools after-school programs from $500,000 to $10 million. Kentucky now spends $37 million on extended-school services. Maryland's legislature recently passed an After School Opportunity Fund of $10 million. Wisconsin provides $20 million for after-school programs. Bills before the Pennsylvania legislature propose to allocate $15 million for after-school programs. At the local level, in 1998 the Soros Foundation established The After School Corporation in New York City to increase the number and quality of after-school programs; as of Winter 2000, over 100 programs were funded. In 1998, Boston's mayor launched his "2:00 to 6:00 Initiative" that now funds after-school programs in 57 schools. Chicago's Lighthouse provides after-school services to 363 elementary schools.

2 While, for simplicity, we refer to these services and activities as after-school programs, they also include before-school programming, summer programs, during-school programs, and weekend and holiday activities. In addition, special educational and recreational programs are run for adults. Several programs also provide a limited array of social services to students, their parents and community members. However, after-school activities are by far the most prevalent type of programming offered.

3 Data used in this report were collected from late 1998 to late 1999, a period covering the first year of operations for most of the programs. The data come from interviews with program staff, activity providers, leaders in the efforts to implement the initiative, local funders and school district personnel; observations of activities for youth; surveys of ESS school coordinators; and early enrollment figures. For a full discussion of the ESS sites' planning and early implementation period, see *Extended-Service Schools: Putting Programming in Place*. Karen Walker, Jean Baldwin Grossman and Rebecca Raley, with Glee Holton and Veronica Fellerath. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. December 2000 (available on our website at www.ppv.org). The ESS evaluation is scheduled to end in early 2002.

4 See "America's Schoolchildren: Past, Present, and Future." Elise Cappella and Mary Larner. *The Future of Children: When School is Out*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall 1999.

5 Evidence emerging from the evaluation of the San Francisco Beacons Initiative suggests an additional challenge in recruiting participants for school-based programs that are meant to draw from the entire neighborhood, not just the school's students. The level of the host school affects which children will participate. The evaluation is finding that middle schools appear to be the most successful at drawing participants from all age groups—about half of the children who participate in programs in those locations are middle school students, with the other half being equally distributed between elementary and high school students. (Report to be published in 2001. Karen Walker and Amy Arbreton, Public/Private Ventures.)

Appendix: The Extended-Service School Models

The Extended-Service Schools (ESS) Initiative was launched in 1997 by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds to create 60 extended-service schools in 17 cities across the country. Each city is adapting one of four nationally recognized models that have been successfully developed and implemented in other communities in the U.S. The models are:

1. The Beacon, a collaboration of a school and a community-based organization (CBO).
2. Bridges to Success, a collaboration of a school, several CBOs and a local United Way.
3. Community Schools, a collaboration of a school, a CBO and a university.
4. West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation (WEPIC), a collaboration of a school and a university.

The Beacon

Originally implemented in New York City Public Schools, primarily in middle schools.

Mission: To develop and operate school-based community centers; to create "safe havens" for youth and families in poor neighborhoods; to promote youth development and resiliency.

Activities: A diverse array of youth development activities in five core areas: education, recreation and enrichment, career development, leadership development, and health. Activities take place during non-school hours and emphasize several factors important to youth resiliency: caring adult relationships, engaging activities, high expectations, youth's opportunity to make a contribution, and continuity.

Governance: Each Beacon Center has a lead agency that manages all activities at the school. A local organization provides technical assistance in organizational development as well as youth development practices. An oversight committee, consisting of school district staff and executive staff from key CBOs, provides general policy and management oversight. Each school has a school-level decision-making body that includes parents and other community representation.

Bridges to Success

Originally implemented in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Mission: To increase the educational success of students by better meeting the non-educational needs of children and their families through a partnership of education, human service and community service delivery systems, with a long-range vision of establishing schools as "lifelong learning centers" and focal points of their communities.

Activities: Vary according to site, but each site has an overarching goal of promoting positive youth development during non-school hours. Activities include educational enrichment, career development, arts and culture, life-skills, counseling, case management, health and mental health services, and recreation.

Governance: The Local United Way agency acts as lead organization and fiscal agent. A local governance structure made up of United Way, school district, social service and community representatives develops citywide programming strategies and oversees implementation. School-level councils assess the needs and assets of the community, and design and implement program interventions. The councils include a program coordinator, school principal and other school staff, parents, students and local partners.

Community Schools

Originally implemented in elementary and middle schools in the Washington Heights section of New York City.

Mission: "Educational excellence, combined with needed human services, delivered through school, parent and community partnerships." "Seamless integration of school-day activities with extended-day programs."

Activities: A wide range of youth development programs during the school day and in non-school hours. Social services, such as on-site clinics, legal assistance and case management, are also provided. Parent education is an important component of the Community Schools.

Governance: Co-management of school facilities by the school and a community-based organization. Management staff from the CBO have space in the school administrative offices so they can interact frequently with school principals.

Additional characteristics of the ESS national adaptation: Local universities play a key role in technical assistance and planning. An oversight committee, consisting of university staff, executive staff from key CBOs, and school district staff, provide general policy and management oversight. In addition, each school should have a school-level decision-making body that includes parents and other community representation.

West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation (WEPIC)

Originally implemented in Philadelphia.

Mission: A school-based school and community revitalization program to produce comprehensive, university-assisted community schools that serve, educate and activate all members of the community, revitalizing the curriculum through a community-oriented, real-world, problem-solving approach.

Activities: Academically based community service, such as graduate and undergraduate interns working in schools to provide educational assistance and mentoring to youth.

Governance: School principals and staff play key decision-making roles, such as deciding what substantive areas will be addressed through the initiative. Community councils provide guidance on program content.

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. In carrying out this mission, P/PV works with philanthropies, the public and business sectors, and nonprofit organizations.

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April 2001

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